Claims:

1. A route search method for a navigation device, wherein:

said navigation device comprises a storage unit that stores link data for each link as a component of roads on a map and statistical data including link travel times obtained by statistically processing traffic information collected previously; and

said method comprises:

a step of establishing a plurality of route search conditions;

a route search step, in which, for each of said plurality of route search conditions, a cost of each link is determined using said link data or said statistical data depending on the route search condition in question, and a route having a smallest total cost for traveling from a departure point to a destination is searched for; and

a travel time calculation step, in which an expected travel time for each of a plurality of routes retrieved in said route search step is calculated using said statistical data.

2. A route search method according to Claim 1 for a navigation device, wherein:

said link data includes a link travel time obtained from map information; and

in said route search step, a cost of each link is determined using a link travel time included in said statistical data when a

search condition is established in order to perform a search using the statistical data, and a cost of each link is determined using the link travel time included in said link data when a search condition is established in order to perform a search without using the statistical data, and then a route having a smallest total cost for traveling from the departure point to the destination is searched for.

3. A route search method according to Claim 1 or 2 for a navigation device, wherein:

said link data includes link length information; and

in said route search step, a cost of each link is determined using the link length information included in said link data when a search condition is established in order to perform a search giving priority to a travel distance, and then a route having a smallest total cost for traveling from the departure point to the destination is searched for.

4. A route search method for a navigation device, wherein:

said navigation device comprises a storage unit that stores link data for each link as a component of roads on a map and statistical data including link travel times obtained by statistically processing traffic information collected previously; and

said method comprises:

a step of establishing a plurality of route search conditions;

a route search step, in which a cost of each link is

determined using link length information included in said link data when a search condition is established in order to perform a search giving priority to a travel distance, and a cost of each link is determined using a link travel time included in said statistical data when a search condition is established in order to perform a search that gives priority to a travel time and uses the statistical data, and a cost of each link is determined using a link travel time obtained from map information included in said link data when a search condition is established in order to perform a search that gives priority to a travel time and does not use the statistical data, and then a route having a smallest total cost for traveling from a departure point to a destination is searched for; and

a travel time calculation step, in which an expected travel time for each of a plurality of routes retrieved in said route search step is calculated using said statistical data.

5. A route search method according to one of Claims 1 - 4 for a navigation device, wherein:

said link data for each link includes road type information of the link in question; and

in said route search step, when a search condition is established in order to perform a route search giving priority to a specific road type, a cost of a link of said specific road type is determined lower in comparison with links of other road types, based on said road type information.

6. A route search method according to one of Claims 1 - 5 for

a navigation device, wherein:

said navigation device displays the expected travel times calculated in said travel time calculation step.

7. A route search method for a navigation device, wherein:

said navigation device comprises a storage unit that stores link data for each link as a component of roads on a map and statistical data including link travel times obtained by statistically processing traffic information collected previously;

said method comprises:

a step of establishing a plurality of route search conditions;

a route search step, in which a cost of each link is determined using said link data or said statistical data depending on a search condition, and a route having a smallest total cost for traveling from a departure point to a destination is searched for; and

a route guidance step, in which route guidance is performed using the route retrieved in said route search step; and

an expected travel time used for said route guidance is calculated using said statistical data.

8. A route search method for a navigation device, wherein:

said navigation device comprises a storage unit that stores link travel times used for calculating an expected travel time for traveling from a departure point to a destination; and

said method comprises:

a step of establishing a plurality of route search

conditions;

a route search step, in which, for each of said plurality of route search conditions, a cost of each link is determined depending on the route search condition in question, and a route having a smallest total cost is searched for; and

a travel time calculation step, in which an expected travel time for each of a plurality of routes retrieved in said route search step is calculated using the link travel times stored in said storage unit, disregarding said route search condition.

9. A route search method according to one of Claims 1 - 7 for a navigation device, wherein:

said navigation device performs a receiving step in which selection of use or non-use of the statistical data is received; and

when a route search without using the statistical data is selected in said receiving step, then, in said route search step, a route search is performed without using the statistical data, and calculation of said expected travel time is performed using said link data and without using the statistical data.

10. A navigation device comprising:

a storage unit that stores link data for each link as a component of roads on a map and statistical data including link travel times obtained by statistically processing traffic information collected previously;

a search condition establishing means that establishes a plurality of route search conditions;

a route search means that determines, for each of said

plurality of route search conditions, a cost of each link using said link data or said statistical data depending on the route search condition in question, and searches for a route having a smallest total cost for traveling from a departure point to a destination; and

a travel time calculation means that calculates an expected travel time using said statistical data, for each of a plurality of routes retrieved by said route search means.

11. A navigation device comprising:

a storage unit that stores link data for each link as a component of roads on a map and statistical data including link travel times obtained by statistically processing traffic information collected previously;

a search condition establishing means that establishes a plurality of route search conditions;

a route search means that:

determines a cost of each link using link length information included in said link data when a search condition is established in order to perform a search giving priority to a travel distance;

determines a cost of each link using a link travel time included in said statistical data when a search condition is established in order to perform a search that gives priority to a travel time and uses the statistical data;

determines a cost of each link using a link travel time obtained from map information included in said link data when a search condition is established in order to perform a search that

gives priority to a travel time and does not use the statistical data; and

searches for a route having a smallest total cost for traveling from a departure point to a destination; and

a travel time calculation means that calculates an expected travel time using said statistical data for each of a plurality of routes retrieved by said route search means.

12. A navigation device, wherein:

said navigation device comprises:

a storage unit that stores link data for each link as a component of roads on a map and statistical data including link travel times obtained by statistically processing traffic information collected previously;

a search condition establishing means that establishes a plurality of route search conditions;

a route search means that determines a cost of each link using said link data or said statistical data depending on a search condition and searches for a route having a smallest total cost for traveling from a departure point to a destination; and

a route guidance means that performs route guidance using the route retrieved by said route search means; and

an expected travel time used for said route guidance is calculated using said statistical data.

13. A navigation device comprising:

a storage unit that stores link travel times used for calculation of an expected travel time for traveling from a

departure point to a destination;

a search condition establishing means that establishes a plurality of route search conditions;

a route search means that determines, for each of said plurality of route search conditions, a cost of each link depending on the route search condition in question, and searches for a route having a smallest total cost; and

a travel time calculation means that calculates an expected travel time using the link travel times stored in said storage unit disregarding said route search condition, for each of a plurality of routes retrieved by said route search means.